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Letter dated 8 August 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I would like to draw your attention to the illegal archaeologic excavations carried out at the archaeologic site of Salamis, in the occupied area of Cyprus, for which the Government of Turkey bears full responsibility, as confirmed by the European Court of Human Rights in its judgement of 10 May 2001, in the Fourth Inter-State Application of the Republic of Cyprus against Turkey (Application No. 25781/94, case of *Cyprus v. Turkey*, Judgement 10.2.2001).

According to the Turkish Cypriot press, recent illegal excavations were carried out between 25 June and 29 July 2001, under the direction of a certain Professor Coskun Ozguner, of the University of Ankara, assisted by 13 Turkish archaeologists from the University of Ankara, and from two universities functioning illegally in the occupied part of Cyprus, namely the so-called Middle East University and Middle East Polytechnic. These recent Turkish illegal excavations brought to light the Baths of Limena, which during the Byzantine era had been damaged and had later collapsed.

The illegal excavations at Salamis first started in August 1999, under the direction of Professor Ozguner with the assistance of Turkish architects and students. The team occupied the dig houses of archaeologic missions that had been excavating in Cyprus before the Turkish invasion of 1974, namely, the Cyprus Department of Antiquities (1952-1974) and the French mission of the University of Lyon (1964-1974). All archaeologic activity at Salamis came to an abrupt end in the summer of 1974, when the Turkish army invaded Cyprus and occupied 37 per cent of its territory, including the archaeologic site of Salamis. The dig house of the Department of Antiquities, where documents and archaeologic materials had been kept, was plundered. The dig house of the French mission, where documents, plans and photographs, as well as archaeologic material had been stored, became inaccessible to its rightful owners.

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Regarding the recent excavations and according to the same Turkish Cypriot press report, Professor Ozguner had asked the French University of Lyon to collaborate with him, but he did not receive an answer. It should be noted that the French University of Lyon, despite the reported calls to collaborate with the Turkish team, refused to engage in this illegal exercise.

The Government of Cyprus holds the Government of Turkey and its subordinate local administration in the occupied area of Cyprus responsible for all illegal excavations, which violate all international conventions and recommendations on the issue, and have an adverse and destructive effect on the cultural heritage of the island. Furthermore, these actions run contrary to the lawful interests of the people of Cyprus, as well as previous excavators, both Cypriot and French, and are also ethically unacceptable in the eyes of the entire international scholarly world.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, I strongly protest the above actions, which violate all international conventions and recommendations for the protection of cultural heritage, and hereby call for their cessation.

I would greatly appreciate it if the text of the present letter could be circulated as a document of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 64, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) George **Kasoulides**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.